

POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Meeting to be held on 20th June 2016

POLICE COMPLAINTS PROCESS IN LANCASHIRE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

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Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the work of the Task and Finish Group set up to scrutinise the Police Complaints Process in Lancashire and their findings.

Recommendation

The Panel is asked to note the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group and discuss this further at today's meeting. Further that the Panel continue to request that the Police & Crime Commissioner regularly provides full reporting on the numbers and types of complaints received, their progress through the system and any lessons learned, in order for them to continue to assure themselves of the good practice and effective handling of complaints in the context that the Commissioner holds the Chief Constable to account for ensuring the same.

Background and Advice

As agreed at the meeting in October, a short term Task and Finish Group was set up to scrutinise the operation of the Police Complaints process in Lancashire in the context of the Police and Crime Commissioners role in holding the Chief Constable to account for the operation of quality services to the public of Lancashire. This was one of the items agreed by the Panel for inclusion in its Forward Plan and had also been identified following a review of a recent complaint.

The following Panel Members were appointed to serve on the Task and Finish Group – Andy Kay, Terry Hill, Tony Harrison and Julie Gibson.

Initial key lines of enquiry (questions) were identified by the Task and Finish Group following its initial meeting on 16th February 2016 and shared with the Commissioner (see below).

Panel Members considered that they should continue their considerations beyond the original planned date for reporting back to the Panel of 8th March 2016 to allow for them to take a detailed look at the processes and understand the issues facilitating appropriate scrutiny of this important area.

For this reason as reported at the last meeting in March, conclusions and recommendations would be reported to the next meeting of the Panel (the AGM meeting being held today).

Initial Lines of Enquiry following the initial meeting of the Task and finish group held on 16th February:

What is a complaint and how is a complaint defined?

How are complaints recorded, how rigorous is the recording system and how is the process monitored?

What starts the official formal process and is there also an informal process?

What is a local resolution? Who decides what a local resolution is?

What criteria are used to decide if local resolution is appropriate and who makes that decision?

Are local resolutions reported to senior management case by case, ie the Chief Constable?

Are local resolutions differentiated by category or type, if they are what are the criteria and types?.

Where and how are local resolutions recorded?

Is the Lancashire procedure in anyway approved externally and if so how?

Do other forces use similar/same systems of classification and procedure or is Lancashire's unique?

What monitoring system is used scrutinise all these decisions and outcomes?

Meeting held on 8th March 2016

Representatives from the Task and Finish Group met with officers from the Commissioner's Office at the rise of the Panel on 8th March and received a presentation from Detective Chief Inspector Ian Whitehead, who deals with Police Complaints for Lancashire. The presentation had been prepared in response to the above initial lines of enquiry and is attached at Appendix 1.

The Panel representatives present explained that they had been keen to investigate this issue following a recent complaint and had initially been quite concerned by figures that showed Lancashire had a high number of local resolutions for complaints in comparison to other forces, however following the explanations received those present were reassured that the processes in place were used appropriately and were proportionate in context.

Meeting held on 22nd March 2016

Representatives from the Task Group met again privately on 22nd March 2016 to further discuss the responses received at the meeting on 8th March both verbally and those contained in the presentation.

Those present felt that the responses and answers received had provided reassurance that the Complaints process was open and clear and that local resolution was used appropriately.

It was also noted that there was a continual audit process in place, and that following the most recent audit a 'Substantial Assurance' classification had been awarded.

It is recommended however that the panel continue to receive full reporting on the numbers and types of complaints in order for them to continue to assure themselves of the good practice and effective handling of complaints in the context that the Commissioner holds the Chief Constable to account for ensuring the same.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

N/A

Legal Implications

N/A

Financial Implications

N/A

Risk management

N/A

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

None.

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Reasons for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate
N/A